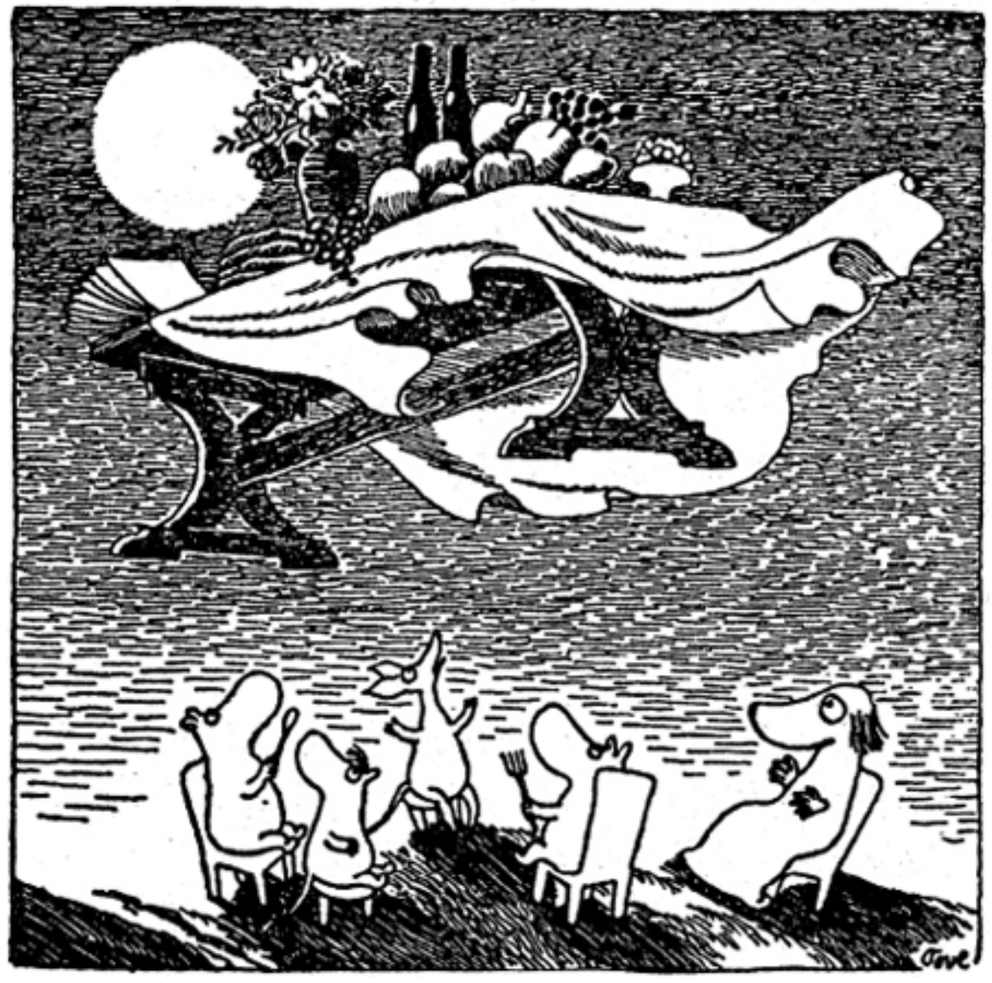
Evil Wizard Distro

Greensboro, North Carolina

NO, YOUR VANGUARD IS NOT DOING MUTUAL AID.



An Imperfect Attempt at Differentiating Red and Mutual Aid in the Piedmont Triad

Dedicated to my dearest friends in Charlotte, North Carolina who are in insurrectionary struggle against ICE occupation at the time of publication. I love you more than I could ever express, stay safe and stay dangerous.

No, Your Vanguard Isn’t Doing Mutual Aid

Differentiating Red and Mutual Aid in the Piedmont Triad

An Evil Wizard Distro Publication

“*Join us in making the ‘revolution’ a game; a game played for the highest stakes of all, but a joyous, carefree game nonetheless!*” Nadia C. in *Your Politics Are Boring As Fuck* (1997)

A Mutual Aid Confused

“*I can't do it alone, but we shall be free someday*
I don't know how to live, but I'm sick of learning how to die.” – Pat The Bunny

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We hope that the place we’re speaking from is merely a hyper-local issue in the Piedmont Triad. We unfortunately fear that this is happening in more places than not. What we have noticed in our locus is something troubling:

We’ve noticed that mutual aid has lost its mutuality.

What we mean by this is that mutual aid efforts in our area are charity at best. It is the act of giving but not receiving in turn. It is benevolence with a mask of omnipotence, and although giving anything material as aid is helpful, it does nothing to empower people or build a thriving atmosphere of reciprocity. People simply take, and then they leave.

This lack of reciprocity and the absence of libertarianism in our relationships of aid is at the root of mutual aid losing its meaning. No matter the intention of the individuals involved, it makes any amount of social media aid requests for people you aren’t in connection with, any amount of food distro conducted by aid projects, or street distribution of harm reduction supplies inherently about being in a relation between the savior and the saved rather than the relationship consisting of two parties at eye level with one another.

If mutual aid is charity, then mutual aid organizations are merely grassroots non-profits that continue that cycle of violence imposed onto us by authority. The ratchet will continue to turn evermore, and this will be internalized into the crevices of our individual minds and externalized with how we carry ourselves in space as radicals.

If mutual aid is charity, then all it does is place a little band-aid on the gaping wound caused by our society and tells you to come back next week for a check-up.

Some might say that charity is still aid regardless, that it still gives people the essentials of life. In this case, it doesn’t matter if the aid is “mutual.” This is an understandable position without the context of this ongoing conversation, but let’s take a closer look though at the fundamental differences between the two modes of aid delivery.

Mutual Aid v. Charity: The Moralization of Assistance

"*Yet it is safe to say that no other superstition is so detrimental to growth, so enervating and paralyzing to the minds and hearts of the people, as the superstition of Morality.*" – Emma Goldman

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Let's start by examining an excerpt from Dean Spade's overview of Mutual Aid, specifically the section "*Solidarity Not Charity*":

"Mainstream understanding of how to support people in crisis relies on the frameworks of charity and social services. We should be very clear: **mutual aid is not charity.** *Charity, aid, relief,* and *social services* are terms that usually refer to rich people or the government making decisions about the provision of some kind of support to poor people—that is, rich people or the government deciding who gets the help, what the limits are to that help, and what strings are attached. You can be sure that help like that is not designed to get to the root causes of poverty and violence. It is designed to help improve the image of the elites who are funding it and put a tiny, inadequate Band-Aid on the massive social wound that their greed creates.

The charity model we live with today has origins in Christian European practices of the wealthy giving alms to the poor to buy their own way into heaven. It is based on a moral hierarchy of wealth—the idea that rich people are inherently better and more moral than poor people, which is why they deserve to be on top. Not surprisingly, the charity model promotes the idea that most poverty is a result of laziness or immorality and that only the poor people who can prove their moral worth deserve help."

Woof, this does **not** fair well for the appearance of charity. In Dean Spade's analysis of charity, he posits that charity is *conditional*, that it is one-sided. In this understanding, charity is the benevolent hand putting a band-aid on the mutilated spirit and claiming that it is the cure. Not only that, it is *selective*. It is open to all, but some are inherently more worthy of receiving the aid than others. That is not cool in the slightest. The other crucial difference between charity and mutual aid is continued in the snippet below:

"*The charity model encourages us to feel good about ourselves by 'giving back.' Convincing us that we have done enough if we do a little volunteering or posting online is a great way to keep us in our place. Keeping people numb to the suffering in the world—and their own suffering—is essential to keeping things as they are. In fact, things are really terrifying and enraging right now, and* ***feeling more rage, fear, sadness, grief, and despair may be appropriate****. Those feelings may help us be less appeased by false solutions, and stir us to pursue ongoing collective action for change.*

That doesn't mean that mutual aid work never feels good. In fact, it is often deeply satisfying and connective, creating caring relationships, raucous celebrations, and an enduring sense of purpose. In my experience, it is more engagement that actually enlivens us—more curiosity, more willingness to see the harm that surrounds us, and ask how we can relate to it differently. Being more engaged with the complex and painful realities we face, and with thoughtful, committed action alongside others for justice, feels much better than numbing out or making token, self-consoling charity gestures. It feels good to let our values guide every part of our lives."

Further Reading

Insurrectionary Mutual Aid by The Curious George Brigade

Mutual Aid by Dean Spade

Against The Logic Of Submission by Wolfi Landstreicher

Your Politics Are Boring As Fuck by Nadia C.

Mutual Aid, the Commons, and the Revolutionary Abolition of Capitalism by Crimethinc

Words Mean Things by Anathema

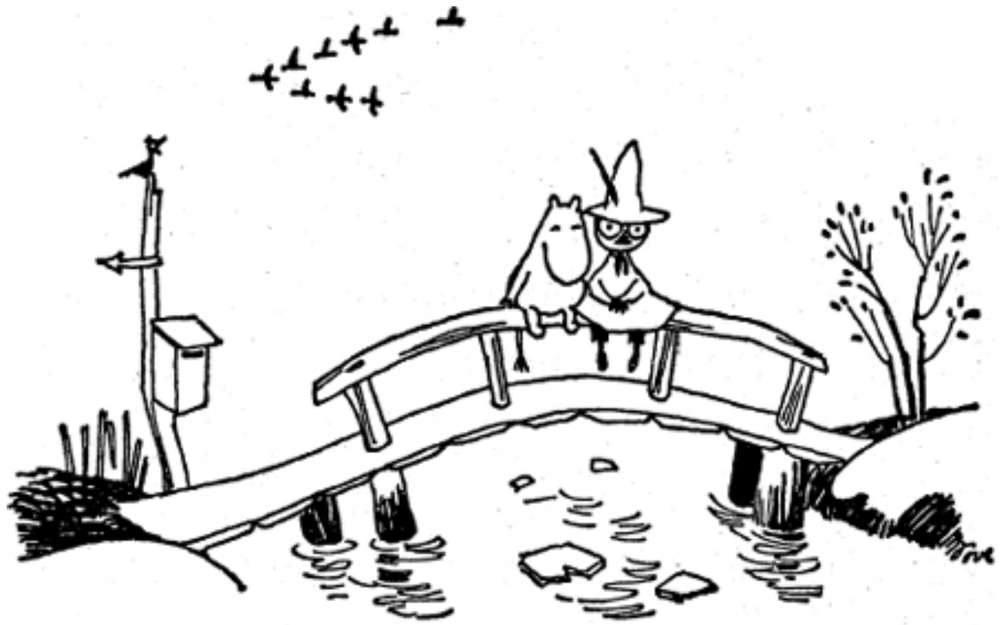
How to Start a Fire by Anonymous

Facing the Flood: Dispatches from organizing and survival in Hurricane Helene

If mutual aid gives you bread only if you could have faith in the gospel, it is not mutual aid.

It is a lie or a complete farce, and anyone who says otherwise is selling you snake oil.

Let us embrace co-existence, and let us take all for ourselves. Towards a insurrectionary mutual aid and organizing to brandish our love and our desires!



Dean Spade said it best my friends: **charity is the moralization of apathy**. It is the triumph of virtue over practice; it is the mirage of the oasis. When you send someone you saw on a Snapchat story fifty bucks to help them pay rent, you are convinced by the powers that be of your good deed, that such an act is *enough*. You are given a pat on the head and told that you have done something truly revolutionary, that the cycle of fulfilling aid requests over social media for people you hardly know is the end all and the be all. That person will be relieved for a month, *until the time comes again to pay the rent*.

A comparison between mutual aid and charity using this exact situation is perfect. Let's do this:

- Someone posting a request for aid on their Instagram story for 350 dollars so that they can cover their rent for the month is a **charity** request. It in all honesty should be called a personal aid request for this reason, there's nothing mutual about it. It is done with the *hope* that someone will be *benevolent* and donate so that they can feel as though they are virtuous**.**

- The unionization of the apartment complex in which that person lives, rent parties with their loved ones, the formation of cooperative housing projects are different. These practices, and if one is so inclined, the squatting of abandoned buildings to house folks can rightfully be considered **mutual aid** as it involves *existing within the context of aid* rather than merely being the benefactor of aid.

Red Aid: The Left Wing of Christ-Like Charity

“We shall unite with any comrade if he abides by the Party's Program, Constitution and decisions.” – Chairman Mao Tse-Tsung

“Without conversion your being is vain.” – Reformed theologian Joseph Alleine

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Arguably the most troubling conclusion of this mode of aid is the adoption of aid delivery by communist organizations that disingenuously refer to it as “mutual aid.” There is an attempted vanguard party local to us called the Greensboro Working Class and Houseless Organizing Alliance (WHOA) that practices this pseudo-mutual aid.

They have been around for well over a decade and we believe they were able to gain as much of a voice as they did due to the state repression that occurred to anarchists in the Piedmont Triad circa the early 2010s. Many anarchists that were originally here fled to the Triangle following this. We posit this absolutely led to this organization filling the vacuum left after this and perpetuating the distortion of mutual aid. I will touch on this history in the next section of this pamphlet, as it is relevant to the underlying message I’m trying to convey through writing this.

This organization has, in the past, been hostile to other projects seeking to collaborate within the niche (which, to be honest, was filled plenty before the arrival of GSO WHOA). This is common knowledge to the anti-authoritarians and anarchists out here, but we think this is a symptom of the loss of mutual aid’s meaning.

Is this mutual aid if there is an absolute refusal to embrace a constellation of care, that interconnected ecosystem of aid projects filling niches? Absolutely not, what this is happens to be more similar to a distinctly Christian charity often practiced by the churches. They will give the people a sermon with their meal. They seek to be the sole benefactor of care; the omnipotent Christian god draped in red.

They are attempting a well-documented Leninist strategy of monopolizing, and to call this mutual aid is naive at best. They’ve done such a good job at radicalizing the lumpenproletariat that they Other the fuck out of the populations they cater to in order to advance their line.

This is, by self-admission of various Marxist-Leninist thinkers, NOT mutual aid; this is a concept they call “red aid.” So what is a definition of red aid? The Marxist-Leninist press hub USU describes their concept of red aid well:

“Red Aid differs from mutual aid in a few critical respects. Mutual aid is a way of organizing a community to meet its own needs; it is a kind of labor exchange where members contribute what they are able and take what they need. In a certain sense, it is an attempt to establish the political economy of communism in miniature. While mutual aid is often run by small(ish) anarchist circles, there’s no necessity that it be organized by the politically advanced or class conscious elements at all.

quote from the Crimethinc zine “*Mutual Aid, the Commons, and the Revolutionary Abolition of Capitalism*”:

“*By contrast with the authoritarian model for social change, the anti-authoritarian proposal is that we establish horizontal, decentralized forms of grassroots organization that put decision-making power in the hands of those who are most immediately affected by the decisions. In place of top-down structures, this means fostering rhizomatic mutual aid networks according to reproducible models. Without the privation and pressure imposed by policing and property rights, people will naturally gravitate to the networks that meet their needs most efficiently and in the most joyous and fulfilling manner.*

If we are trying to bring about liberation rather than authoritarianism, establishing mutual aid projects that can meet material needs is not a distraction from the project of decentralizing power and access to resources. Rather, it is an essential part of developing and propagating the practices via which people can engage in that project. Some call this “building the new world in the shell of the old.”

This also means that the form of these mutual aid projects matters: the dynamics that they foster between people are as important as the resources they provide. If they are unidirectional, if they only foster the agency of those on the “resource provision” side of the equation, they will not be able to plant the seeds of a new way of life.”

I have spoken of the Triangle earlier in this piece, and I think their locale is a **stellar** example of such a revolutionary mutual aid. In the wake of Tropical Depression Chantel, their streets were flooded and people instantly began communicating with their neighbors without expectation of state, NGO, or vanguard assistance. The moment it was safe, rebuilding and reciprocal aid began and now many people maintain stronger bonds of affinity than before. Just months after recovery (which is still occurring), militant struggle is emboldened after the arrival of CBP and ICE.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, it was grim. Yet in the face of polycrisis, the spirit endures and people at a moment’s notice sought and succeeded to assist one another in a crisis. They disregarded and, rightfully so, distrusted the assistance of those who thought they knew better like FEMA. And because of this, they continue to win everything. Despite facing a situation Appalachia was never prepared for, they endured and came out more resilient on the other end.

Both locales are tremendous examples of this. The importance of this was that it was not the oppressive state or condescending NGOs helping, nor was it the self-righteous Leninist intelligensia leading the pushback; it was individuals arming their desires.

That’s what it always is. Authority will never save us, no one will ever save you but yourself. But if you’d like, we can save ourselves together.

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If mutual aid is not empowering to everyone involved, it is not mutual aid.

If mutual aid makes you feel dependent on the giver to actualize your desire, it is not mutual aid.

Towards A Combative Mutual Aid

"It really doesn't have to be this way. But so long as we are most concerned with our moral worth, we will continue to serve the death machines as instruments of reproduction. So, I ask, as I always ask: What do you want?" – Ignatius

"All that is called 'material property', 'private property', 'exterior property' needs to become what the sun, the light, the sky, the sea, the stars are for individuals. And this will happen! It will happen because we—the iconoclasts—will violate it! Only ethical and spiritual wealth is invulnerable. This is the true property of individuals. The rest no!" – Renzo Novatore

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If we wish to practice a truly revolutionary mutual aid, we must disconnect it from anything that resembles power-over ideology. We will indeed have an agenda like the Leninists do, but our agenda will not be this twisted aberration of the indomitable spirit of life known as Marxism. Ours will be of sharing bread and dancing around the fires of our workplaces, offices, supermarkets, churches, and capital buildings here and now.

We will meet people where they are at, not to save them but so that they can save themselves **with** us.

We will meet people where they are at, because everyone has something splendid to bring to us.

We will meet people where they're at not to *build organizations*, but *to organiz*e. As friends, accomplices, lovers, family, and partners. We will refuse to be lumped into categories, we will choose our associations ourselves for mutual aid is not mutual if it is not voluntary.

We will meet people where they're at so that we can jump forward into battle against the existent hand-in-hand.

We'll meet people where they're at because through this mode, we will cause good trouble and have fun doing it.

We must view ourselves as part of the communities we serve rather than separate from them. Through this we can build the kind of consciousness necessary to brandish our weapons and our spirits towards all that seeks to oppress us in any form it takes.

The whole world will be mine and it will be yours, because we will seize it ourselves guns-a-blazing and bread-a-baking.

We need no program but the one we create together, you and me and anyone else who seeks to join us on this adventure. This sentiment is complimented by a nice

Red Aid, in contrast, is an explicitly communist strategy. Red Aid has to be run by a Communist organization. Although it can incorporate a labor exchange element as part of its overall strategy of organizing, there doesn't need to be any such element for it to accomplish its primary goals. Red Aid can very easily be a unilateral form of aid directly from a Communist organization to a community. Unlike mutual aid programs, Red Aid is not performed primarily with community self-sufficiency as a goal. It doesn't "develop dual power" or challenge the state system of distribution directly. Red Aid also differs from charity in that its goal isn't merely to provide material necessities to make a difference in underserved communities by meeting their needs.

So what are the aims of a Red Aid logistics program, then? They are fourfold:

1. *To create deep and authentic links with the lowest strata of the working class, that section which is least susceptible to the bribery of the labor aristocracy;*
2. *To identify and develop potential Communists from among that strata;*
3. *To learn the immediate needs of the class and then, using these three aims, to*
4. *Address those needs through mass meetings and other organs of working-class power; to organize the working classes and make them aware of their own existence as a class; to elevate class-consciousness and open a front of class struggle against the enemy."*

By **definition**, red aid is no different than Christian churches offering aid with a prerequisite of devotion to their worldview. It is the act of entering a community and declaring yourself its savior. It seeks to co-opt revolutionary struggle for its own ends. It is at its core chauvinist and unable to exist within this constellation of care. It must have all for itself, and this is counter-productive to building a truly revolutionary resiliency and reciprocity.

Moreover, it brings its archaic biases into the fold and seeks to impose them onto people who frankly are tired of the bit. People do not want to hear why Mao's "On Practice" was a brilliant text which we should read like the Gospel of John, why the industrial proletariat should be the spearhead of proletarian revolution or whatever other religious nonsense they ramble on about while people eat their lunch.

It unconvincingly attempts to distance itself from charity, despite being based on the same underlying mechanism that drives charity forward: the goal of maintaining dependency on the Savior. This is what motivates the Red Cross, state welfare programs, benefit packages at the workplace, Christian soup kitchens, and presumably what motivates communist aid organizations like WHOA as well.

Red aid is insufficient and actively detrimental to liberation. Wolfi Landstreicher elaborates on this notion, albeit indirectly, in his piece *From Politics to Life: Ridding Anarchy of The Leftist Millstone*:

"Because leftism is the active perception of social struggle as a political program, it is ideological from top to bottom. The struggle of the left does not grow out of the desires, needs and dreams of the living individuals exploited, oppressed, dominated and dispossessed by this society. It is not the activity of people striving to reappropriate their own lives and seeking the tools necessary for doing so. Rather it is a program formulated in the minds of leftist leaders or in organizational meetings that exists above and before people's individual struggles and to which these latter are to subordinate themselves.

At its best, the anarchist endeavor has always been the total transformation of existence based on the reappropriation of life by each and every individual, acting in free association with others of their choosing. This vision can be found in the most poetic writings of nearly every well-known anarchist, and it is what made anarchism 'the conscience of the left'. But of what use is it to be the conscience of a movement that does not and cannot share the breadth and depth of one's dreams, if one desires to realize those dreams?"

Why GSO WHOA continues to refer to itself as a mutual aid group is beyond us. It might be out of ignorance, confusion, but it could also be an intentional choice to muddy the definition. Either way, we feel as though anyone who wishes to take mutual aid seriously should understand this crucial difference.

The Parable of the Vampire and the Invitation

Prior to the 2010s, Greensboro was actually quite the hub for autonomous radical projects. Not just in Gate City, but across the Piedmont Triad. It reached its peak in the late 1990s to early 2000s with the presence of Greensboro groups like the Crimethinc Urban Pirates, who lived on Cedar Street and spoke with those at eye-level to themselves great wisdom. Pirate radio, DIY car maintenance, guerrilla gardening, first aid, dumpster diving, fabric mending, DIY herbal abortion, the works!

The local Food Not Bombs is also believed to have gotten its start during this period, the turn of the millennium was the golden age of autonomous collectives and reciprocal care in the Triad.. The culture of care was such a beautiful sight at this time. There was no permission to be asked, no need to look good to the powers that be or to yourself; what was needed was done to aid voluntarily and mutually and it was done *well*.

Then sometime in the early 2010s, state repression began. Anarchists and anti-authoritarian radicals began to be targeted by city police and county sheriffs. Fearing for the security of their projects and their individual freedoms, many fled to the Triangle and Asheville where they continue to have vibrant scenes to this day.

The silence was deafening for years, there was but state welfare and liberal advocacy organizations offering solutions through weightless rhetoric and temporary relief. Then in 2018, WHOA showed up. WHOA came and asserted itself, seeking to fill the vacuum left by autonomous collectives and community care. It did this on the grounds that it desired "unity," despite growling at any who sought to assist it. WHOA claiming the place it did was not carried out through domination but through *no one objecting to them being let in*.

There was an open seat at the table, and no one objected to the stretching of their legs.

There were even less open sets, and even less. Less and less as people sat by when WHOA carried out vile acts and apologized for repulsive things.

It eventually reached a point where the actions WHOA has conducted have absolutely butchered what mutual aid really is, and what it is capable of. Truly, a tragedy.

But what if it wasn't this way? What if we had another option, one that we can seize now?